

# Abating Regional Haze



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service  
Air Program

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## Background

The 1999 federal Regional Haze Rule mandates that by 2008 all states will have a USEPA-approved State Implementation Plan (SIP) to improve visibility in the 154 Class I areas (including 86 Forest Service-administered Wildernesses to natural background levels by 2064 (**Fig 1**). Each state belongs to one of five Regional Planning Organizations (**Fig 2**) that guide the planning process and must consult with federal land managers of Class I Wildernesses affected by its emissions. Forest Service interests involved in the review process are:

- Utilization of prescribed and wildland fire use, within reason.
- Ability to influence industrial pollutant control technologies mandated by SIP.
- Control of the magnitude of emissions affecting visual and ecosystem resources managed by the Forest Service.

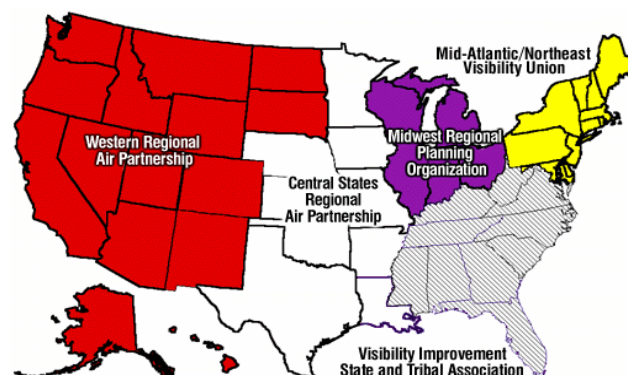
The states working through the RPOs together with EPA and the federal land managers including the National Park Service and the Fish & Wildlife Service will use atmospheric modeling to coordinate planned emissions inventories beneficial to all.

## Successes

Forest Service air program staff are active in all RPOs although the optimum level of participation far exceeds available agency staffing. We are preparing a national review guide for agency decision makers that will aid in making strategic emission reduction recommendations. This will improve coordination between States with regard to Forest Service interests and facilitate the President's plan for energy development and independence. The guide will utilize experiences from the four states that accelerated their State Implementation Plan approval schedule (MT, MN, NC, and VA). Collateral duties involve a Forest Service/States effort to collaboratively craft each state's Smoke Management Program. The Air Program goal is to streamline and reduce National Environment Policy



**Fig 1.** Webcam photo of Upper Buffalo Wilderness, Arkansas. Plans are being made to eliminate haze in this and all Class 1 Wilderness by 2064.



**Fig 2.** Regional Planning Organizations are state and federal agencies, industry and advocacy groups working together to develop strategies to reach natural visibility conditions in all Class I areas by 2064.

Act (NEPA) costs by helping each state incorporate a Smoke Management Plan within the SIP. This would allow the state to cite a federally-approved SIP when approving wildland fuel burning.

## Challenges

Because air pollution does not respect political boundaries, reaching 'yes' among all stakeholders in the planning process will require much negotiation. As one of three key beneficiaries from effective SIPs, the Forest Service is making plans to actively review and comment on each of all 50 states. Our Fire Management personnel will need to be involved in writing effective Smoke Management Plans for all states with National Forests.

## Summary

Forest Service air program staff, representing class I area federal land managers, are participating in Regional Planning Organization-coordinated SIP



**Fig 3.** A beautiful day in Sipsey Wilderness. Will all Alabama days be so clear in 2064?

preparation and reviews aimed at improving the visibility in wildernesses nationwide (**Fig 3**). This will be accomplished through integrated management of a wide spectrum of air pollutant sources, including wildland fuels burning. We believe a compatible forest fuels reduction program can be both effective and comply with state and local regulations.